U.S. Laws

U.S. Laws [1]



U.S. Laws That International Students and Scholars Should Know

While you're at Yale you are expected to follow laws and policies that govern a variety of daily life and academic activities. In the U.S. there are different levels of laws, including federal, state, and local community laws which might differ depending on the jurisdiction. Violating a U.S. law can have different consequences for an international student or scholar than for Americans, and can negatively impact your U.S. immigration status.

While it is unlikely that you will encounter any legal difficulties, there are times in life when the unexpected happens. Knowing the law can make all the difference, so it is important to be aware of the policies and laws that you are subject to. OISS advisers [2] can provide legal referrals, and are available to listen confidentially, provide guidance and discuss any concerns you may have.

Important Laws and Policies

Drinking Age

- The legal drinking age is 21.
- It is a violation of the law to purchase alcohol for those under age 21.
- The legal limit for drinking and driving is a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08. It's a good idea to research [3] what that means for you.
- Driving “under the influence” of alcohol (known as DUI) could lead to the State Department revoking the U.S. visa [4] in your passport. If you are too impaired to drive, use safer transportation options [5].
- Read and observe Yale’s Alcohol and Other Drugs policies [6].

Drug Use

- The possession or use of marijuana is prohibited by federal law and the state of Connecticut.
- Recreational use of marijuana is permitted in some states like Massachusetts, but it remains a federal crime to possess or consume marijuana. Even though state law in Massachusetts permits recreational use of marijuana, it is not permitted on federal land including popular national parks like Cape Cod, or on school

campuses which receive federal funding.
- At an airport or port of entry to the U.S. if a non-citizen admits to an immigration official that in the past they possessed marijuana, they can be denied entry into the U.S., and/or have a visa or green card application denied. Read more from the Immigration Legal Resource Center. [7]
- Driving under the influence of drugs can result in an arrest for Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants (DUII) and can lead to the State Department revoking the U.S. visa. [4]
- Read and observe Yale's Alcohol and Other Drugs policies [6].

Sexual Misconduct and Consent

Sexual misconduct [8] incorporates a range of behaviors including sexual assault, harassment, intimate partner violence, stalking, voyeurism, and any other conduct of a sexual nature that is nonconsensual, or has the purpose or effect of threatening, intimidating, or coercing a person. For more details, including definitions, university policies and resources, please visit this page [8]. Yale strives to be a community free of sexual misconduct, by promoting the essential values of respect and responsibility, providing education, and working with students, faculty, and staff to create a community that is safe and supportive for all. Yale takes all complaints and accusations of sexual misconduct seriously. More information on sexual misconduct resources [9].

Sexual Consent **[10]**

Consent can only be accurately gauged through direct communication about the decision to engage in sexual activity. Presumptions based upon contextual factors (such as clothing, alcohol consumption, or dancing) are unwarranted, and should not be considered as evidence for consent. Although consent does not need to be verbal, verbal communication is the most reliable form of asking for and gauging consent. Talking with sexual partners about desires and limits may seem awkward, but serves as the basis for positive sexual experiences shaped by mutual willingness and respect. (Excerpted from Guidance Regarding Sexual Consent [10].)

Sexual Harassment and Assault Response & Education (SHARE) **[11]**

SHARE [11] is available to members of the Yale community who are dealing with **sexual misconduct of any kind**. SHARE responders are Yale University mental health professionals. All calls to SHARE are confidential, and can be anonymous if you wish. SHARE will offer information and support, and sometimes recommendations, but won't tell you what to do — their goal is to help you make your own informed, empowered decisions. You can call SHARE [12] at any time of night or day, any day of the year: **(203) 432-2000**.

- Yale Sexual Misconduct Policies and Definitions [13]
- Sexual Misconduct Scenarios [14]
- More information on Title IX [15]
- More on sexual consent (RAINN) [16]
- How to respond if someone is pressuring you (RAINN) [17]
- Consent- It's Simple as Tea [18] (video)

Family Situations and Domestic Disputes

- **In the case of violent domestic disputes, call 911 immediately.** Any physical assault, including by your spouse or partner, is a crime. Non-consensual intercourse (even in a married couple) is considered rape. These types of crimes are customarily handled by the police, not by others - not even family or close friends.
- If you are aware of a potentially violent situation, you can report [19] it.
- It is against the law to leave your child alone in a car or public place.
- It is against the law to leave your pet in the car.

Bike Laws

- Bike helmets are required for anyone under the age of 13.
- Riding on the sidewalk is against New Haven statute and can result in a citation and fine.
- The City of New Haven provides an online bike maps [20].

Traffic Violations

- Become familiar with the driving laws for Connecticut before you begin driving by reviewing the DMV Driver's Manual [21].
- If you receive a traffic ticket for a moving violation such as speeding or running a red light, refer to the CT court site [22] for information about your options. If you owe a fine, or wish to enter a plea of not guilty and go to court, it is important to respond quickly within the dates stipulated on the ticket.
- If you receive a parking ticket from the City of New Haven, it is recommended that you act quickly if you want to dispute the ticket. If you don't, make the payment [23] as soon as possible because the fine will increase over time.

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